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Security Council

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Thursday, 19 March 2009, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Shalgham	(Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. La Yifan
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Ms. Eloeva
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to Haiti (11 to 14 March 2009)

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09-27342 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to Haiti (11 to 14 March 2009)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Haiti, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mérorès (Haiti) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by His Excellency Mr. Jorge Urbina, head of the Security Council mission to Haiti and Permanent Representative of Costa Rica.

I would like to welcome the return of the members of the Council and representatives of the Secretariat who took part in the mission to Haiti. I now give the floor to Mr. Jorge Urbina, head of the Security Council mission to Haiti.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council mission visited Haiti from 11 to 14 March 2009, in accordance with its mandate, as set out in document S/2009/139. The mission was able to assess first-hand the situation in Haiti at a time when there seems to be a window of opportunity to reinforce stability and undertake a process of sustainable development.

I would like to start by expressing my thanks to the representatives of Council members for their interest in the mission and their active participation in all its activities. Members of the Council demonstrated the concern that exists regarding the situation in Haiti. I fully believe that our future discussions will benefit from the knowledge acquired during this visit.

On behalf of the members of the Council, I should like to thank the Haitian authorities for their hospitality and openness. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Permanent Representative of Haiti, Ambassador Léo Mérorès, for having accompanied us and for his contribution to the success of the mission. I must also recognize the impeccable organization carried out by the Secretariat, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hédi Annabi, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) teams and United Nations representatives in Haiti. They should be commended for their work.

The mission's visit began with two successive meetings with MINUSTAH leaders and the United Nations team in Haiti. The Council's mission subsequently held a meeting with the President of the Republic and his Prime Minister in order to hear their views on the situation, receive information on their programmes and gather their impressions of the work carried out by MINUSTAH. Representatives of the Council received additional information on the plans of the Haitian Government during a subsequent meeting with the Prime Minister and the Ministers for Planning, Interior, Agriculture and Rural Development, Public Works and Transportation. Moreover, Council members held meetings with leaders of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, the chairs of the Justice and Security Committees of both legislative chambers and the minister responsible for relations with Parliament. Council members also met with leaders of political parties and members of Parliament from the opposition and held conversations with representatives of the private sector and civil society in Haiti.

The meeting with MINUSTAH involved the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his deputies, the MINUSTAH Force Commander and the Police Commissioner. The United Nations team was led by the Resident Coordinator. Lastly, the representatives of the Council undertook working visits to Gonaïves, Fort Liberté, Ouanaminthe and Cité Soleil.

The members of the mission gathered updated information and assessments of important aspects of the situation in Haiti, in particular concerning the general security situation, political dialogue and the elections, the extension of the State's authority, the rule of law and human rights, social and economic development, and regional cooperation.

The mission was able to note the progress made in terms of security after five years of MINUSTAH presence in the country, in particular that resulting from the support provided to the National Police aimed at increasing its capacity. The greatest improvements can already be noted in a drop in crime and the people's growing confidence in the police force. The police force is now being strengthened through professional training for its personnel and the enhancement of its operational and institutional capacities.

The goal of having 14,000 members in the police force and thereby reaching an acceptable rate of one officer per 1,000 inhabitants, taking into account real needs, is making solid progress. The original number, 3,000 members, has now been tripled. In addition, recruitment and verification are being carried out successfully.

The Council mission was able to assess the community violence reduction programme during one of its field visits. This project has been made possible thanks to cooperation between MINUSTAH, its Government counterparts, the National Disarmament Commission and the United Nations team in the country, led by the United Nations Development Programme. Progress has been made possible through quick-impact employment programmes, with intensive use being made of labour forces. This has contributed to stabilizing marginal city areas that were until very recently considered lawless.

The mission also gauged the Haitian State's lack of capacity to control its borders and territorial waters, which could potentially encourage illegal activities. The commencement of maritime and air patrols by MINUSTAH, with support from the National Police, should improve the situation. These patrols should, however, be complemented by other bilateral and regional initiatives, as these problems are regional in nature and MINUSTAH does not have the mandate to carry out such operations or to carry out interdiction operations.

The mission received information on the political dialogue and the electoral processes from the President and the Prime Minister, who provided details on the five committees established by the President to gather input from political parties and civil society for an ambitious institutional reform programme. During its visit, the Council held conversations with the national coordinator of these committees and those leading the committee on constitutional reform.

The Haitian interlocutors agreed on the need for significant reforms, although there were differing nuances in the various points of view. There was agreement on the general views on the division of powers, excessive decentralization and the multiplicity of electoral processes. The arguments in favour of a revised Constitution are gaining ground among political leaders, who agree on the general issues relating to the cumbersome administrative structure resulting from the 1987 Constitution, the costly schedule of elections and other limitations that must be changed. Members of the Council were aware of the tight schedule for constitutional amendments and acknowledged the importance of reforming the Constitution to bring about better governance in the country. Here, the mission passed on a message to be pondered by Haitian political leaders in order to achieve the necessary consensuses for the appropriate constitutional reform process. In the meeting with the President of the Presidential Commission for the Reform of the Constitution, Council members expressed the need to enhance coordination between the executive power, Parliament and civil society in order to avoid splits and political paralysis that could hamper the reform process in the country.

Members of the Council also had meetings with the President and judges of the Provisional Electoral Council. Future electoral processes impose an electoral period that will be spread out over the next 36 months, during which voters will go to the polls eight times. The Council mission received information on logistical support provided by MINUSTAH to the Provisional Electoral Council as well as on the security assistance provided. For its part, the Electoral Council reiterated its commitment to ensure free, fair and inclusive elections in order to ensure the credibility of an electoral process that is threatened by the non-participation of one of the most important political groups, which has been excluded on legal grounds. The Council mission said that everything possible must be

done to deal with the perception of exclusion that is felt in particular sectors of the population.

During their meeting with representatives of political parties, Council representatives were able to verify attitudes that undermine the legitimacy of the forthcoming elections, such as suspicions of fraud and pronounced State involvement. However, Council members received assurances that objections will be dealt with through legal mechanisms and there will be support for the electoral process as a means for clearing up political disputes.

With respect to extending the State's capacity, members of the Security Council became aware of the weakness of the Haitian system of institutions. For example, the State can provide education to only 10 per cent of registered students, which is already a low percentage of persons of school age. In addition, the State controls neither the content nor the quality of private education, which is responsible for a very high percentage of education in the country. The same thing is true of other sectors of the institutional structure that do not provide basic services to the population.

The Council mission was able to note that the Government and MINUSTAH work together in broadening the State's capacity, both on the ground and in enhancing its ability to administer the country and offer basic services to the population. National authorities highlighted legal progress against corruption, the approval of a customs code, a statute for parliamentary staff and administrative and financial rules for the workings of the legislature.

However, the Government and the local administrations face limitations when it comes to providing essential services to the people, such as health and education.

During the visit to Ounaminthe, the Council mission observed progress in the integrated border management programme. The mission noted the permeability of and free movement in the border area between Haiti and the Dominican Republic and noted that progress had been made on infrastructure. Members of the mission heard explanations of the preparation of key legislative documents on border management drawn up by the Government in collaboration with MINUSTAH.

Members of the Council encouraged the national authorities to continue enhancing the customs data system, intensify land patrols and open new control points to increase the collection of income, which is an important aspect of the State's fiscal resources. Similarly, members of the Council were informed of the reactivation of the joint Haiti-Dominican Republic Commission, which should lead to the drawing up of a work programme dealing with issues of common interest.

Council members visited the MINUSTAH naval base in Fort Liberté, where they examined the operational plan for maritime patrols together with the United Nations police and the Haitian National Police. The mission was shown that the joint naval team at Fort Liberté also takes part in a weekly border patrol by land, sea and air.

With respect to the rule of law and human rights, from the conversations with the Minister for Justice and Public Security, the Secretaries of State for Justice and Public Security, the Director General of the Haitian National Police and the Director of the Prison Administration, as well as the Force Commander and Police Commissioner of MINUSTAH, it became clear that the priority for Haiti is to strengthen the capacity of its National Police, which is essential for national ownership of the matter of security. Progress has been made, inter alia, in professional training for officials, the increase of its institutional capacity and the development of infrastructure with a view to achieving the goals set out in the plan for police reform. The ambitious programme requires the support and cooperation of the international community.

The mission noted the successes achieved in the reform and strengthening of the rule of law and its institutions in Haiti. Council representatives who attended the inauguration of the School for Magistrates noted the advances in the organization of the judiciary with the implementation of three important laws: that establishing the Superior Council of the Judiciary, the Statute of the Magistracy and the law supporting the system for the training of judges.

Despite these successes, the country is still awaiting the establishment of the Superior Council of the Judiciary, the consolidation of the Office of Citizen Protection, legal inspections, the execution of the strategic plan for prison expansion in the country and a general review of the current condition of prisoners in preventive detention. The limited capacity of the judiciary to administer justice quickly has led to a

sharp rise in the prison population living in overcrowded conditions and whose fundamental rights are being violated. Both the Prime Minister and the Minister for Justice expressed the desire to improve justice sector capacity and recognized the support of MINUSTAH in this area.

Haitian authorities emphasized the respect for civil and political rights in the country, particularly for freedom of expression. Members of the mission expressed concern at the limitations on economic, social and cultural rights in Haiti, a state of affairs that has been aggravated by the humanitarian situation caused by natural phenomena in 2008, the world food crisis and the deterioration of the international economy.

With respect to the humanitarian situation, Haiti is particularly vulnerable when it comes to hurricanes and tropical storms from the Atlantic. Members of the Council saw the effects of the flooding caused by last year's hurricanes in the city of Gonaïves. They were also made aware of the efforts to prevent disasters, to reduce risk and regulate water basins. The mission visited a labour-intensive project to reduce vulnerability by terracing, constructing small dikes, reconfiguring watercourses and renovation canals.

Food security is still one of the greatest concerns in the country. Members of the Council received information on the difficult situation of the farming sector in Haiti. The Permanent Representative of Japan, supported by other members of the Council, expressed concern at the low productivity in a sector that employs more than 50 per cent of the population and that meets barely 48 per cent of food needs. Members of the Council encouraged the Haitian authorities to adopt agricultural policies designed to boost production. Additionally, they urged the Government of Haiti to display its commitment to establish goals that can be attained in reasonable time frames — all of this in order to contribute to stability of the country.

With reference to economic and social development, it was evident to the mission that the current levels of extreme poverty — 80 per cent of the population live on less than $2 per day and 50 per cent on less than $1 per day — are incompatible with the goal of establishing stability in the short term. The Haitian interlocutors indicated how important it is to continue working with the international community to implement a reconstruction and development strategy in the country. They acknowledged the importance of the poverty reduction strategy paper and the post-disaster needs assessment. In that context, the proposals of Professors Paul Collier and Jeffrey Sachs and the United States legislation establishing preferential access for Haitian exports — the Haitian Hemisphere Opportunity Through Partnership Encouragement Act (HOPE II) — are all essential initiatives to activate Haiti's economy and bring about long-term economic security.

The forthcoming donor conference, to be held in Washington, D.C., convened by the Inter-American Development Bank was also viewed as a major opportunity for Haiti to enjoy access to additional funds for its recovery and reconstruction. The Council mission noted that the contribution of the diaspora to Haitian development, which is today contingent on pending reform to allow dual citizenship, must also be reviewed.

On the subject of regional cooperation, the Council mission had the opportunity to meet with members of the core group and was able to note the decisive role it played in ensuring effective coordination between MINUSTAH and the diplomatic and donor communities. Throughout the mission, Council members observed the high degree of commitment of Latin American countries to Haiti. As well as fully participating in peacekeeping by contributing troops and police, the countries of the region continue to lend support to the country's socio-economic development through bilateral and multilateral support, specific development programmes and quick-impact projects carried out in the MINUSTAH framework. In that context, it must be emphasized that the Haitian authorities stated on repeated occasions that South-South cooperation is an area of growing interest to them.

The mission was also able to see that the continued participation of regional and subregional organizations such as the Organization of American States and the Caribbean Community is important to ensure Haiti's integration within the broader context of Latin America and the Caribbean and in order to strengthen the commitment of its partners in the hemisphere.

I do not wish to conclude without the mission's conclusion that the international community has a

commitment to Haiti's success. It is therefore important that the Haitian authorities promote national consensus, not only to ensure stability and political security, but also in order to establish a solid basis for Haiti's socio-economic development.

The draft report of the mission will soon be distributed to Council members for their review. It contains a detailed analysis of the mission's activities and the conclusions it reached in the areas that were covered in today's briefing.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Urbina for his briefing.

On behalf of the Security Council, I should like to express appreciation to all of the members of the Security Council and the Secretariat who participated in the mission, which was very ably led by Ambassador Urbina, for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibilities on behalf of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Haiti.

Mr. Mérorès (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Government of Haiti, I thank the Security Council for having organized the Council mission to Haiti. Special thanks go to Ambassador Urbina, who led the mission. We believe that his briefing was comprehensive and covered all areas addressed by the mission during its visit to Haiti. As members know, this visit took place following the visit of the Secretary-General accompanied by former President Bill Clinton; it thus enabled the international community, represented by the members of the Council, to get an exhaustive idea of the situation that Haiti has been facing for some time. As aptly stated by Ambassador Urbina, it is clear that since 2005 the security situation on the ground has improved considerably. That was clearly stated by the various interlocutors who had the opportunity to share their impressions with the members of the Council.

Nevertheless, as the country's highest authorities, starting with the President and Prime Minister, said, the economic and social remains very fragile. As Ambassador Urbina said, we are is still suffering the devastating consequences of the four successive hurricanes that struck Haiti in 2008. It is important to underscore here for the Council that the meagre economic progress achieved in 2007 was battered by the hurricanes. As a result, the agricultural sector in particular, as well as basic infrastructure, suffered a serious blow from which the country is finding it very difficult to recover.

Nonetheless, on behalf of my Government, I wish to reaffirm to the international community that Haiti is resolutely committed to reconstruction and development. For that reason we attach great importance to the upcoming donor conference to be hosted by the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington, D.C., and we hope that Haiti will again enjoy the kind support of the international community, which so far has never failed us.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate my gratitude to the Security Council for having organized this visit. I wish again to convey my special gratitude to Ambassador Urbina, who led the visit. I also wish to express the appreciation of the Haitian Government for the Council's constant and continuing interest in Haiti.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.